



East Gippsland Tourism Structure

Phil Rickards, Tourism Officer,
East Gippsland Shire Council

Tel. 5153 9500
philr@egipps.vic.gov.au

Developing and sustaining a region-wide tourism body is an important and ongoing task, especially given that stakeholder support and industry models change over time. This is best illustrated in Victoria's East Gippsland region, where the tourism industry structure has evolved markedly since 2004.

During 2005, the Shire-wide marketing Campaign Committee evolved into a new body, 'Destination Gippsland Inc', which covered all six Gippsland municipalities.

At the same time, regional stakeholders, including the East Gippsland Shire and the 13 independent local Business and Tourism Associations (BTAs), as well as the Chambers of Commerce (CCIs), recognised that there was still a need for an overarching body to enable tourism's private sector to speak with a single voice.

Tourism Alliance Victoria was asked by Tourism Victoria and the East Gippsland Shire Council to facilitate the process. The East Gippsland Regional Business & Tourism Association (EGRBTA) evolved out of this work.

As its first major project, the EGRBTA initiated the production of a quality regional Official Visitors Guide (OVG) . This was designed to not only provide the group with a focus, but to also potentially provide it with an ongoing income stream. In association with the publishing company, each member BTA/CCI agreed to assume responsibility for selling a section of the guide in their own locality.

Twenty thousand dollars was provided locally for the project which, together with some additional funds provided by Tourism Victoria, allowed the group to engage a graphic designer. Additional drought and bushfire relief funding also helped to seed the \$100,000 project.



The OVG was published and quickly became a successful piece of tourism collateral. As a next step in the evolution of the EGRBTA, the Shire Council provided it with funding on a four-year basis to engage an Executive Officer.

After four years it was expected that the EGRBTA would establish its own funding sources and be less reliant on Council income.



Currently, representatives from Parks Victoria, the Department of Sustainability & Environment, and the Council attend EGRBTA meetings as ex-officio members. There is a strong working relationship between the regional body and the local BTAs/CCIs, the regional peak tourism body, Destination Gippsland Ltd, and a newly formed body, East Gippsland Marketing Inc. East Gippsland Marketing Inc is responsible for the wider promotion of East Gippsland to the 'Visit, Live and Invest' sectors, including tourism.

The East Gippsland Regional Business & Tourism Association has established itself as the lead industry body and voice in East Gippsland. Its responsibilities broadly cover industry and product development, the production of the Official Visitors Guide and marketing activities within the region, as well as acting as the channel for Destination Gippsland Ltd's marketing campaigns.

Key findings

- *Tourism industry structures evolve over time and need to adapt to changing circumstances.*
- *A peak tourism body is needed within a municipality to carry the interests of the industry forward.*
- *Industry bodies are strengthened by having key stakeholders such as Council, Parks Victoria and DSE involved in at least an ex-officio capacity.*